

**St. Francis Catholic Chapel**  
**CH-663**  
**Rock Point**  
**Public**

**1908**

St. Francis Chapel is an excellent example of early 20<sup>th</sup> century sacred architecture in Charles County. Exceptionally maintained and preserved, the site, with its expansive view of the Wicomico River, is an important reminder of Charles County's rich Catholic heritage.

Established as a mission church in 1908, like St. Francis de Sales in Benedict, the chapel is associated with the Catholic response to the needs of growing maritime communities in both Benedict and Rock Point during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

# Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. CH-663

**1. Name of Property** (indicate preferred name)

historic St. Francis Catholic Chapel

other

## 2. Location

street and number      13675 Furbush Road      not for publication

city, town	Rock Point	vicinity
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county Charles

**3. Owner of Property** (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name	Archdiocese of Washington
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street and number	15848 Rock Point Road	telephone	301-259-0237
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city, town	Newburg	state	MD	zip code	20664-6603
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#### 4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Charles County Courthouse tax map and parcel: 89 p. 72

city, town	LaPlata	liber	151	folio	736
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## 5. Primary Location of Additional Data

☐ Contributing Resource in National Register District  
☐ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District  
☐ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
☐ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
☐ Recorded by HABS/HAER  
☐ Historic Structure Report or Research Report  
☐ Other

## 6. Classification

[illegible]

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## 7. Description

Inventory No. CH-663

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### Condition

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

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Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

St. Francis Catholic Chapel is a front gable frame structure located on an isolated peninsula overlooking the Wicomico River. Constructed in 1908, the site is approached by a secluded drive cut through woodland. Surrounded by woods and marsh grasses, the chapel is modest in its overall proportions. It is distinguished by its simple architectural style complimented by a tranquil setting.

The three bay chapel faces southeast and consists of a frame structure, clad in original German siding. The steeply pitched roof is covered with asphalt shingles and capped with a simple open belfry. The foundation consists of brick piers infilled with concrete block. Rear additions are diminutive in both size and height and include a cross gable room on the north end and a smaller front gable and shed addition extending from the rear. Two corbelled cap chimneys are present in the rear additions.

The façade has three bays including a centered covered entry flanked by two windows. The porch, originally supported by brackets, has been reinforced with wrought iron rail posts. Double 6-panel doors lie beneath a large transom lancet window. Narrow double-hung lancet windows flank either side of the entrance. A round stained glass window stands above the entry porch. The open belfry which extends from the crest of the roof has a front gable orientation and shelters a large iron bell. The belfry appears to be supported by two narrow posts extending through the roof and cornice. The posts are then fastened to the gable wall. It is capped with a simple wooden cross pinnacle.

The southwest and northeast main block side elevation mirror one another and both include four bays. Windows are regularly placed and feature two paired windows in the interior of the wall surface flanked by single double-hung windows on the ends. All windows are rectangular and feature square-edged surrounds with molded wooden lintels. The southwest addition includes an additional paired window.

The rear elevation is sparsely treated. Likely serving as a sanctuary it includes a round stained glass compass window directly under the gable. The shed extension to the west includes a three panel door.

The interior was not available for survey.

## 8. Significance

Inventory No. CH-663

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history	
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime industry	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:	

**Specific dates** 1908

**Architect/Builder** Unknown

**Construction dates** 1908

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register

☐ Maryland Register

☒ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance reports, complete evaluation on a DOE Form - see manual.)

St. Francis Chapel is an excellent example of early 20th century sacred architecture in Charles County. Exceptionally preserved, the site, with its expansive view of the Wicomico River, is an important reminder of Charles County's rich Catholic heritage.

Established as a mission church in 1908, like St. Francis de Sales, Benedict the chapel is associated with the Catholic response to the needs of growing maritime communities in Charles County.

In 1908, S. Spearman and Verlinda E. Lancaster sold to the Charles County Board of Education one acre of ground, formerly part of Rock Point Farm. A school shared the site, and served area children until 1945. Local accounts suggest the chapel was constructed for the wedding of S. Spearman Lancaster's daughter, Jennie, to Francis Roach in 1908.

The history of Catholicism in Maryland began with the Act of Toleration authored by Cecil Calvert and enacted in 1649. This act granted religious freedom to non-Protestants and led to the establishment of several Catholic communities throughout Maryland. In 1790, Pope Pius VI established the first Roman Catholic diocese in the United States. Located in Baltimore and known as the See of Baltimore, this diocese initially included all of Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi.

The area known as Rock Point is associated with the larger area of Cobb Neck, first patented by Capt. James Neale in 1642. This 2000 acre tract was known as Wooleston Manor and generally encompassed the land between the Potomac and Wicomico Rivers. Until 1904, Cobb Neck was associated with the contiguous Newport district and one priest was shared by both. The first church in the Cobb Neck peninsula was established in 1873 at the site of the St. Mary's Cemetery near Woodland Point. This frame church burned in 1880 and was rebuilt at the current site of Issue soon after, becoming Holy Ghost Church. Four years after its separation from Newport, St. Francis de Sales Chapel was constructed at Rock Point as a mission church under the direction of Holy Ghost.

The history of St. Francis de Sales Chapel, Rock Point mirrors that of another mission church established in one of Charles County's maritime communities. In 1903 St. Francis de Sales, Benedict was established and a chapel was soon constructed. This chapel burned in 1924. Like Rock Point, Benedict was a fisherman's community and had grown substantially during the last half of the 19th century in response to the emerging commercial seafood industry. A similar mission was established at Solomon's Island in Calvert County by 1903.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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Inventory No. CH-663

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of surveyed property 2

Acreage of historical setting \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name Rock Point

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

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Verbal boundary description and justification

St. Francis Catholic Chapel is associated with Charles County Property Tax Map 89, Parcel 72

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Cathy Currey Historic Sites Survey

organization Charles County Planning Dept

date 4/4/01

street and number 200 Baltimore Street

telephone 301-396-5815

city or town LaPlata

state MD zip code 20646

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
DHCD/DHCP  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville MD 21032  
410-514-7600

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-663

Section 8 Page 1

St. Francis Catholic Chapel  
name of property  
Charles County, MD  
county and state

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Chain of title:

September 21, 1960	S. Spearman Lancaster trustees & Charles County Board of education to Patrick A. O'Boyle, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Washington....April 10, 1908 S. Spearman and Verlinda E. Lancaster granted unto the Board of Education a tract of land included wholly or in part within the boundaries of land intended to be conveyed, that deed containing a provision that if deemed necessary to close the public school, the property should revert back to Lancaster heirs. Whereas school ceased in 1945, 1 acre <b>151:736</b>
April 14, 1908	S. Spearman and Verlinda Lancaster to Board of County School Commissioners of Charles County, 1 acre <b>19:90</b>

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Section 9 Page 1

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name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

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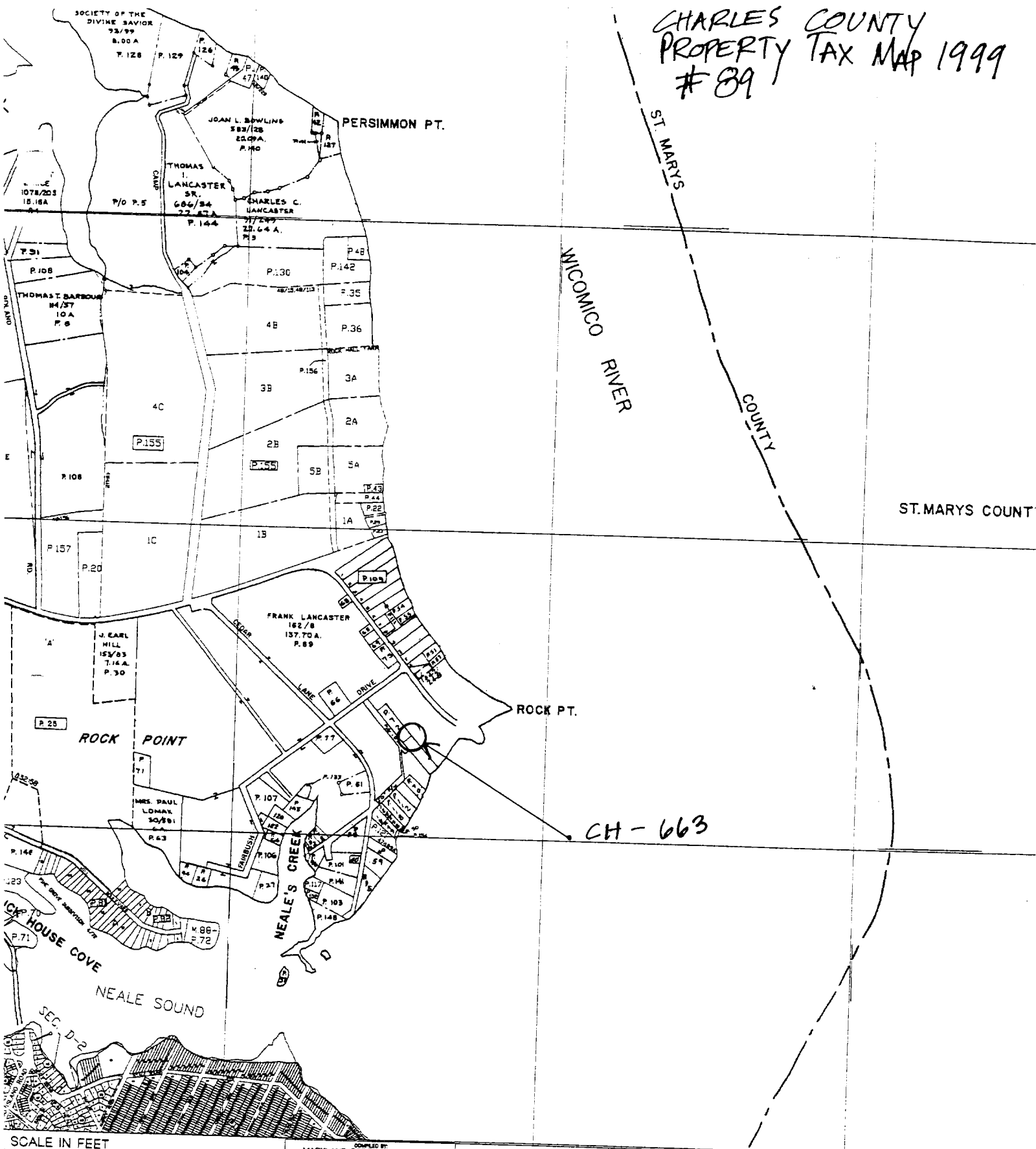
**Major Bibliographic References:**

Brown, Jack D., et al. Charles County, Maryland, A History. Charles County Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

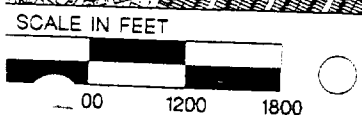
Charles County Circuit Court Land Records, Charles County Courthouse, LaPlata, Maryland.

Klapthor, Margaret Brown. The History of Charles County, Maryland. LaPlata, MD: Charles County Tercentenary, Inc., 1958.

# CHARLES COUNTY PROPERTY TAX MAP 1999 #89



CH-663

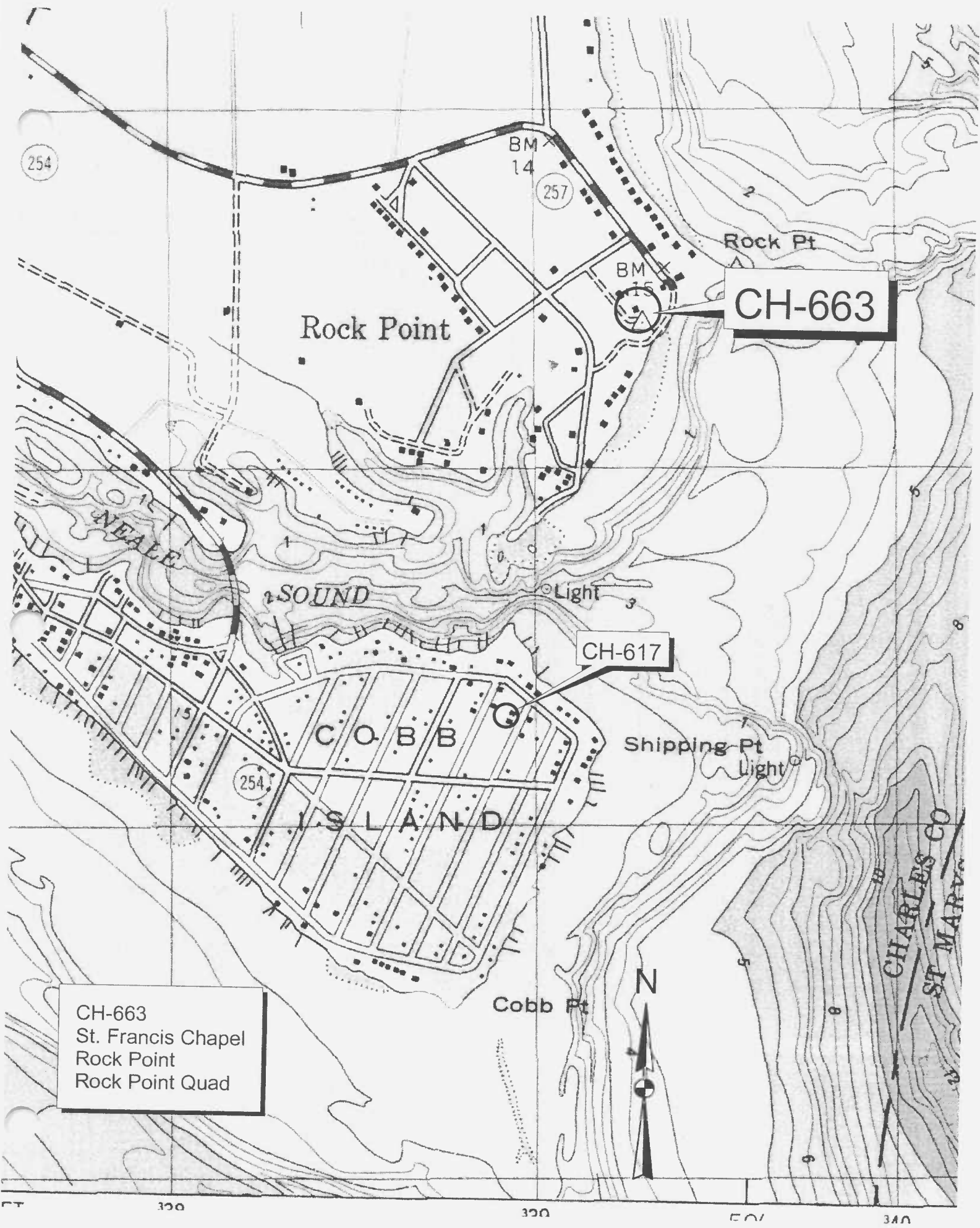


COMPILED BY <b>MARYLAND OFFICE OF PLANNING          PROPERTY MAPPING SECTION</b>		PROPERTY LINE SUBDIVISION BOUNDARY CONTINUING OWNERSHIP PARCEL NUMBERING: P-### (ASSIGNED TO IDENTIFY AND INDEX OWNERSHIP MUST BE PRECEDED BY A MAP NUMBER)	
THE INFORMATION SHOWN HEREON HAS BEEN COMPILED FROM DEED DESCRIPTIONS AND IS NOT AN ACTUAL SURVEY. IT SHOULD NOT BE USED FOR LEGAL DESCRIPTIONS. LEGAL SURVEYING ERRORS ARE USED TO NOTIFY THE PROPERTY MAPPING SECTION, 300 W. PRESTON ST., BALTIMORE, MD 21201		SCALE 1"=600' (RF 17200) BY CAT DATE JUL '99 USER	
REVISED TO:		QUADRANGLE	



CHARLES COUN  
MARYLAN





Rock Point

Rock Pt

CH-663

CH-617

Shipping Pt Light

Cobb Pt

CHARLES CO  
ST MARYS

CH-663  
St. Francis Chapel  
Rock Point  
Rock Point Quad



CH-663

ST FRANCIS CATHOLIC CHAPEL

ROCK POINT

2/2001

C. CURREY

MD SHPD

LOOKING NW

1 OF 2



CH-1663

ST. FRANCIS CATHOLIC CHAPEL

ROCK POINT

2/2001

C CURREY

MD SHPO

LOOKING EAST

20F2